

SATURDAY, APRIL 10, 1869.

Subject: The Sympathy of Christ.

# PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

*A Weekly Publication*

OF

## SERMONS

PREACHED BY

### HENRY WARD BEECHER.



NEW-YORK:

J. B. FORD & CO., 164 NASSAU STREET,  
PRINTING-HOUSE SQUARE.

1869.

AMERICAN NEWS COMPANY, AGENTS FOR THE TRADE.

European Agents, SAMPSON LOW, SON &amp; MARSTON, Crown Buildings, 188, Fleet Street, London.

Sold by all Carriers and News Dealers.

Brooklyn, January, 1869.

Messrs. J. B. Ford & Co.:

*Gentlemen: Mr. T. J. Ellinwood has been the reporter of my sermons for some ten years; and he is the only authorized reporter of them. The sermons which you are printing, week by week, from his hand, are published by you alone, and are the only ones which go before the public with my consent.*

HENRY WARD BEECHER.

## PLYMOUTH PULPIT.

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ANY BACK NUMBERS CAN BE FURNISHED.

# THE SYMPATHY OF CHRIST.

SUNDAY MORNING, MARCH 28, 1869.

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## INVOCATION.

WE rejoice in thee, thou Father of light, and desire to draw near, clothed this day with hope and joy, that we may be the children of light. Thine is the heaven; thine the sun that goeth forth there; thine are all the sweet influences of the spring; thine is the summer; and thine the glory and the bounty of the autumn. But what is this earth, which thou dost bless by the natural sun, compared with thine own household? There, where thy heart shines; there, where there is no winter and no night—there art thou most God. We bless thee for the knowledge of thyself, thy nature, as developed toward men; and we rejoice this day that we may come rejoicing with all thy people, in Christ, in thy life, in thy power. Give to us something of that life. Mark us by that power. Set us apart—and this day especially. May all tears be wiped away, and all joys be summoned, that we may come into thy presence rejoicingly, and worship not alone in the fear of the Lord—the fear that love gives—but in the joy of the Lord. And may this Sabbath be indeed to us a rest. May we carry something of the spirit and gladness of the sanctuary to our several homes, and be cheered wherever we are. We ask it for the Redeemer's sake. *Amen.*

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“SEEING then that we have a great high-priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high-priest which can not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”—HEB. iv. 14-16.

THE New Testament is full of the doctrine that God sustains a personal relationship to mankind—to the individuals of the race; which is more exactly represented to us by the experience of a father and child, than by any other. It is true that God is represented as Sovereign, as King, as Judge, as Lord, as Magistrate; and toward the race collectively he is. But personally, and to the individuals of the human family, the representation of the Word of God is, that he sustains an intimate personal relationship, full of friendliness, full of love, full of sympathy. This seems fabulous to many, because they have no idea of the divine manifestation except such a one as our bodily senses can perceive. And since God makes to them no ap-

pearance, and addresses his personality to neither the eye nor the ear nor the hand, they can not understand how there should be a God that sympathizes with the individuals of the race, forever hidden from them personally, silent, communicating in none of those ways by which on earth one soul is wont to communicate with another. And it is a matter of grave doubt to such, whether there be a God, or any that is comprehensible by us.

To this doubt of the divine sympathy on account of the hidings of God, is added the statement that it is not to be supposed that in an infinite being there could be any such experience of sympathy as we understand from the use of such terms. It is argued that an infinite being would concern himself with affairs that had some importance commensurate with his own being. It is scarcely to be allowed, many say, that God would meddle with the minute affairs of such a world as this. And as men become acquainted with what constitutes the sum of their fellow-men's lives, still less are they inclined to think that God sympathizes with the outpouring, the folly, the foolishness, the wickedness of the human soul.

This gross judgment is derived from the tendencies of the worst side of our human nature. We attribute to God the feelings which we have, and the actions which flow from those feelings. But in us they are our lowest and our most unworthy feelings. Such reasoning infers from men's selfishness and vanity a divine indifference to all that is not conspicuous, exclamatory, and praise-begetting. If this world were a thousand times as big as it is, the argument would naturally infer, that perhaps God would look at it; and if men were vastly greater than they are, then may be God would sympathize with them. But the world is so small—its face being but a mere spot in the stellar universe—and men are so little, that it is not to be supposed that God wearies himself or meddles with such things. Our better nature should have taught us better; for our own higher moods of manhood put all these to shame.

The assumption that this world, or the men that live on it, are relatively small, is not for a moment to be allowed—though if it were true, it would make no difference. The moral magnitude of things has no relationship to the physical. What if a man should say that Washington was not a great man because he was not a ten thousandth part as great as the Alleghany Mountains, comparing moral magnitude with physical? What has the size of a man, or the duration on earth of a man, or his physical powers, to do with the moral measurement that belongs to the understanding, the reason, or the moral sentiments? Is a battle great by the size of the nation that fought it, or the field that it was fought in? Or is it great by the skill and the bravery enacted, and by the long-reaching sequences that flow from it? The part

which this world is to play in the far future; the experiment of human life; the story of divine sacrifice and love; the part which redeemed men are to enact in their translation into the heavenly sphere—these all give a moral grandeur to this world, and utterly overcome the objection that God would not be likely to give minute personal thought to the evolutions of individual life. Not in himself, but in his relations to his Author and Creator, and in his relations to the future dwelling of his spirit, man is great, and the lowest and the least is immeasurably great.

Another source of difficulty in conceiving of an active sympathy on the part of God with the personal feelings and history of men on earth, has been an intense presentation of God's holiness and justice, so that men have been afraid to believe that God did sympathize. That he was a spectator; that he registered misdeeds, and would punish them, men have been made to believe. The stern attributes of God have been dwelt upon sometimes till from them alone it was that men derived their idea of God's nature. It is true that God is just; it is true that he punishes; but it is not true that the presentation of God's justice and his penal administration is a fair representation of the divine nature. It is true that the base and sub-base is the foundation of the organ; but it does not follow that, if one plays the sub-base incessantly, he has a better idea of what that organ is than if it only has its subordinate part and interplay.

There be many that are preaching what are called "foundation doctrines" so constantly that men never suspect what God is. These alternative views, these views of God's justice or alternative love, in their effect upon the minds of men, misinterpret, and too often absolutely slander the divine nature. The New Testament is full of cheer and of brightness from Christ's manifestation of sympathy; and the Book of Hebrews, arguing to the Jewish mind, and therefore employing Jewish symbols, is peculiarly full of this glorious truth of the active and sympathetic nature of God.

That the silent Jesus is not now gone forward to other things; that he dwells above to maintain intimate and helpful relations with all who love him; that he is nearer to men than when he was present with them; that it was needful for our sakes that he should go up to his own sphere, and resume his spiritual nature—these are abundantly the teachings of the New Testament. Christ is nearer to us, dearer, and more sympathizing, in all the practical applications of sympathy, than when he walked clothed with the human form upon earth. It is taught that this relationship is so intimate and effectual that he is concerned and affected by our whole experience. Our feelings, as it were, throw their shadows continually upon him. He joys with us; he sorrows with us; he makes our case his own. No language can

parallel that which he employs. He comes into us and abides with us. He takes us unto himself, that as he is one with the Father, so we may be one with him. As the branch sympathizes with all that befalls the parent stock, and as the parent stock also feels whatever mutilation there is of the branch, so Christ represents his disciples as being as intimately related to him as that.

Some of the great features of this truth should be more emphatically stated; and we proceed to do it.

*First.* Christ has not relied upon the omniscience of his divine nature, upon the speculative interests of a benevolent looker-on, but he has taken upon himself the whole human condition. I read in the opening service a scripture which bears upon that subject. "Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high-priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted."

It is unquestionably true that this is the language of conformity to human ideas to a certain extent; but it seems to me just as true that this teaches that there were certain fulfillments of experience; there were certain lessons to be learned which even the divine nature could not take except in this one way of experience; and that in order to be a perfect Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ must needs take upon himself the whole human law and condition. For it says, in another place, "It became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." What that necessity was, or what was the range and realm of this discipline, we do not know. It is sufficient that we understand that there was an important sense in which Christ, taking the human form and dwelling in it, and under the influence of the laws of nature, learned that which made him a more perfect exemplar and a more perfect Saviour, and prepared him to be more sympathetic with us than he would have been.

In our text we have the declaration, "For we have not an high-priest which can not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted"—tried, proved—"like as we are, yet without sin." And the inference is, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace." On account of this experience of

temptation, he is fitted to save men that are tempted and that sin.

We are not to suppose that our Saviour had every single experience that man ever has. That is not needful. A geographer may be a competent representative of the land through which he travels, without having stood on every single foot of ground which he describes. Robinson did not need to tread every square inch of the streets of Jerusalem in order to understand the topography of that city, and represent it accurately to us. It was not necessary that Christ should pass through every shade and every inflection of human experience in order to understand them. For all experience issues from certain definite foundations of faculty; and it is enough if every faculty which works in us was proved, pained, tempted, and tried in him, and tried up to this measure, that no man should thereafter live who should have any temptation or trial that should make against any given faculty such a pressure as was made against our Saviour. Pride—is it tempted among men? All that I require is, that Christ should have felt a temptation of pride that should more than equal it; that should swell immeasurably above and overmatch any trial that befalls his followers below—in other words, enough put to proof in that particular faculty of the human soul, to understand what that faculty can suffer; how it can be tempted; what course is needed to sustain one under such temptation. It is not needful, therefore, that Christ should sustain the relationship of husband, for he never was in wedlock; or of father. It only requires that he should sustain such a relation to universal human nature or life that there should be no faculty, no passion, no sentiment that is tempted in us, that should not also be tempted in him; and that there should be no such pressure brought to bear upon us that our temptation should ever be greater than his knowledge of temptation through his own suffering.

“Tempted in all points,” is not, therefore, *tempted in all things*, “like as we are.” There are many combinations of circumstances that never occurred in his life; and there may be very many shades of feeling. Checkered, endlessly varying, lights may fall upon human experience that did not precisely so fall upon Christ’s experience upon earth. But there has been no assault made upon any human power, and there never will be an assault made to carry any human power the wrong way, that Christ did not have upon the same point a hundred fold, probably, more pressure and more besieging and assault. And he is therefore thoroughly versed in human life. Whatever reason needs, he felt the need of. Whatever the imagination needs, he felt the need of. Whatever the moral sentiments need, either for opening and enlarging them, or of temptation; whatever sym-  
pathy

thies between man and man in us require divine help—in all these respects Christ also was put to proof.

It did not take him so long to live as it does us. A man does not live by the length of his years, but by the activity of the nature that carries him through those years. Christ filled up the measure of human experience in the brief time that he was here on earth; and now, having ascended on high, there is nothing for him to learn. He has learned it all, because he has passed through it all. And because he has thus taken part in the human lot, the offer is made to every human being to come boldly to him. There is no sorrow, and no joy, that he does not perfectly understand. You never will be able to whisper a secret into the ear of the sympathizing Saviour.

And yet, grief always is conceited. Grief always says, "There never was such suffering as mine; there never was such peculiar grief as mine. Others have had sorrows, but ah! I could bear such a sorrow, or such a sorrow." Every body could bear every sorrow except the one that he has. And grief always says, "Mine stands apart and outside of every ordinary experience." And above us all is the Saviour, saying, "Come boldly to me in every time of need, for succor and for help. For I have been tried in every respect as you are, and without sin. I am therefore a High-Priest that can be touched with the feeling of your infirmities. Come to me."

This sympathy of Christ is not simply a joint feeling, or a mere echo of ours. It is the most superficial understanding which we have of sympathy, that we feel with our fellow-men. This is something, this is much, in human experience—to have friends that feel with us, though they do nothing, and take nothing away from our emotion; though they add nothing to joy, and take nothing away from our sorrow. Yet there is great pleasure in knowing that if we are in grief, our faithful friend grieves; that if we are in gladness, our faithful friend is glad. That is much; but that is the lowest and the least part of a fruitful sympathy.

Much of human sympathy is, to identify yourself simply with a friend in his good or his ill; but we see on earth that there are germs of a sympathy that is nobler than this—in a mother, in a teacher, in a superior nature that companions with us, that not only understands our experience, but that looks back at the causes, and looks forward at the results, and sympathizes with the feeling, but does it also with a large educating eye, and takes in the whole scope of it—whence it came, and whither it goes; and then measures the sympathy, not merely by orbing joy for joy, or fear for fear, but with this large conception of the official relations of experience to character and to greater happiness.

Why should I feel sorrow because, when I shut my hand, the child thinks that he has lost the bait that is there? I have

only shut it in order that, lowering the tone of his joy, and bringing sadness, I might make him more glad when I spring it open, and show him what I hold for him. And how, in a larger way, are we doing continuously that which I do in sport with little children! How are men sympathizing with men, and yet paining them! When some great news of gladness has come to you, how do you sometimes go, with a downcast look, to a friend's house, as if it were bad news, and beginning afar off, and, as it were, tempering them lower, and then, when some little fear is excited, burst out with the good news! And when you see them sorrowing, does it make you sorrow with them? You are in sympathy with them; but you do not sorrow, because you know it is a mere bait; that it was a discord thrown in to bring out the glorious harmony of gladness and joy.

And so there is a sympathy which does not merely duplicate your experience, but that, as it were, rises up above you, and takes in the whole thought of your nature and your character, and your joy, and your sorrow, and sympathizes in such a way that it sympathizes more with your whole manhood than with special acts of individual experiences in that manhood. Do we not sympathize continuously in this way with persons that are in joy, and that are in sorrow? Are we not less glad than many a child is, though we are glad that he is glad? Does not old age sit and smile when younger ones break out in the exhilaration of joy? Why do they not go as far with them? Because they better understand what is the whole run and effect of joy. They sympathize, to be sure; but not to the full measure of this feeling, which is false and exaggerated in the young.

When the young mother sheds the first glowing leaf in autumn, and the babe is carried from her arms and buried, and she, like some fragrant bush in the morning covered with dew, shakes tears from every twig, because I, too, do not measure every one of her sighs, and every one of her sobs, do I not sympathize with her? For I say to myself, "What is this loss but the making of a greater nature in you?" She buries the babe to keep it. So only do we keep our children, as children, when we put them away from us in infancy, and see them no more until we meet them in heaven. They remain shrined in the imagination, and they are little children forever. And do I not see what patience and gentleness it will work in her, and what serene dignity is already begining to steal upon her? And do I not know that God is calling her in taking this little child? He does not take it, perhaps, for the purpose of educating her; but he takes it for his own wise purposes; and the sorrow that is left behind is a means of education. Do I not sorrow because she has lost her babe? But do I just measure her experience over again in my mind? Do not I look with a large eye, enlightened by past knowledge of such things

in life? Do not I look at the whole scope and operation of these phenomena? Grief is near-sighted, and holds its trouble close up; but love is long-sighted, and takes the events of life, and looks at them in all points of view, and sees how they look against the east, and how against the west; how toward the north, and how toward the south; how above and how below; how against one background, and how against another. Love looks upon a thing all around, in its germs, and in its fruits; in its presence and in its coming. It sympathizes not with the limitation of grief, but with the largeness of that love of humanity which is in every event.

Our Saviour sympathizes with us. Yet Christ sympathizes not simply as one that would make us happy. So it is that a servant does. Servants are dearer to children than their parents, often. Do you want to know why? Generally because the servant does not care for the whole run of the child's life. He cares to make him glad now, or to assuage his pain now. So the servant gives him the top that the father would not give him. The servant grants him little permissions that the mother would not grant him. The father and mother sympathize with the child more largely, more comprehensively, and are all the time administering with reference to his manhood—not with reference to his momentary gratification. They do not want him to be always a child. They want him to become a man. Therefore they give or take from him one or another element as their experience and wisdom dictate, with a view to the child's whole good. But the servant has nothing to do with educating the child, and only thinks of the present. The servant wants to have a good time; wants to get along in the pleasantest way possible. And so, when the child falls and hurts himself, and cries, the servant takes him up, and pats him on the head, and pities him, and takes a world more care of him than the father would. The father, when the child falls down, does not allow himself to be tender to him, because tenderness rather undoes a child. He straightens up before him, and says, "Be a man, my son," and teaches him manhood, and sympathizes with his pain. But the servant does not care for the manhood. He runs to wait on the child, and lets the child have its own way, till he thinks that the best friend he has in the world is the servant. He thinks so simply because this servant sympathizes with his momentary sorrow; because he takes care of the child's present; because he is nearest to his little body, and nearest to his flesh-interpreting instincts. Hence it is that children like servants in life better than they do their parents—unless parents are wise enough to become servants for their children's sake. Parents ought to play with their children. The parent ought, at times, to make himself child enough to institute be-

tween him and the child the full sympathy which is sometimes divided, the servant taking one part, and the parent keeping the other.

Now, our dear Master is father and mother to us; and the sympathy of Christ with us—do not suppose it is just this: that when you are glad, Christ is glad; and when you are sorrowful, Christ is sorrowful. It is that, to be sure; but it is a thousand times more than that. When your gladness rolls up, and, as it were, is magnified upon the proportions of the infinite, and in some measure takes it in, there is a thousand times more joy than otherwise there could be in you. But after all, he loves you so well that he is not going to study your momentary convenience. That way lies self-indulgence, and self-indulgence is a moth and rust that doth corrupt and utterly destroy true manhood. No man can be a man that has not learned how to overcome self-indulgence; that has not learned through pain, under burdens and crosses long continued, to carry himself right manly.

Our dear Master loves us; and, loving us, he means to make something out of us. Therefore he is not going to be indulgent, nor is he going to let us be self-indulgent. And his sympathy is something more than a duplication of our experience. It is not an echo of our heart. Our Saviour is with us in sympathy; or rather, the sympathy of Christ works in us by seeking to draw us up above all the familiar experiences of our woe into his own nature and character. Our sorrows usually spring very largely from low conditions of nature. And our remedy lies in spiritual exaltation. Who is there that has not found that a higher state of feeling cured ten thousand vexations in life? If you were to chase each particular care, and each particular fret, and each particular sorrow, and each particular stinging and annoying insect, you would have business on hand for the rest of your life; but if you can rise into a higher state of mind, these cease to be annoyances and cares. Ninety-nine parts in a hundred of the cares of life are cured by one single salve; and that is, "Thy will be done." The moment a man can say that, and let go, that moment more than ninety-nine parts in a hundred of his troubles drop away.

I have stood upon Mount Holiyoke when I heard the thunder below; and I have seen men traveling up the side, and making haste to get out of the storm. I, standing higher than they, escaped both the rain, the wind, and the pelting thunder; and they, going up through the storm, got on the top, and were also free from it. Many, many storms there are, that lie low, and hug the ground; and the way to escape them is to go up the mountain side, and get higher than they are.

One of the elements of divine sympathy is so to sympathize with men that they shall be lifted up above the dominion of their lower

instincts and appetites, and live more perfectly in their higher nature. I draw a man out of vulgarity by making him love me, and refinement in me. It pleases God to make us love the beauty of holiness, opening his own nature, and showing the meaning of his providences, and of his dealings with us, and enlarging our experience in such a way that we are growing toward a higher manhood. And so, our troubles, one by one, coming from our lower nature, of themselves cease, of themselves drop away.

The teaching of some of the passages in the book from which we have taken our text is directly upon this point—this memorable 12th chapter of Hebrews, which I never can read enough; which I never can expound enough; which I understand better every time I read it; which, though I have thought I understood it altogether, I find each time I am ignorant of. It is right in the tenor of the remarks that I have been making.

“Looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”—who looked clear across and clear through the world, and through time, and saw what were the relations of events that were going on round about him to the eternal sphere, and who endured that which seemed unendurable. *Look unto him*, and consider him that endured all this, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds. And then he says, “Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth.” His is not one of those flattering loves. His is not one of those self-indulgent loves. Whom he loves, he loves so much that he will not let them abide in the lower parts of their nature. He will rout them out; he will drive them up. Whom he loves he means to make more of. He means to ennoble them. A king ennobles a man by putting a crown on his head; but God ennobles men by putting dispositions in their hearts. Whom he loves he *chastens* and *scourges*.

That is very severe. A man may be chastised with small whips, but no man is scourged except with cord, laid on with soldiers' hands. It is a horrible operation. God both chastens and scourges men, and all because he loves them.

Wonderful love that is! and yet it is just your love. You have not a child whose body is worth more to you than his mind. No child of yours ever told a lie under circumstances of great baseness—not for his own benefit, not even for the love of praise, but to cheat and harm some other child; no child of yours ever told a lie

that was bad in itself, and for a purpose that was worse than the lie—no child of yours ever did that, that you did not feel rising against him an utter indignation, not because you hated the child, but because you loved him. All your identification with the child plead for punishment. You said, “It is my child; and he is not worthy of me; and he *shall* be worthy of me.” And you chastised him, not once, as if it were a perfunctory duty, as if you were saying your prayers, but repeatedly. Oh! how heartily does a man lay on the strokes who loves his child, and wants him to be noble, pure, manly, and fit to wear a crown, though he may never touch it till he gets to heaven. How he *puts it on* when he does whip his child! How does he, as it were, mean to drive through every stroke, that while it exoriates the skin it may cleanse the heart, acting as a counter irritation toward righteousness! And Christ says that his sympathy with us is not the sympathy of an effervescent feeling, merely going with us when we have a momentary joy, or a momentary throb of pain. His sympathy is larger than that. He sympathizes with our understanding, with our moral sense and conscience, with our taste, with all our sentiments, with hope, and fear, and love; with every thing that goes to make up a man, and that makes him immortal. He sympathizes with the whole of our being, and means that his whole administration, and the administration of our sorrows as well, shall make our manhood larger—not tear it; not kill it; not strip and reduce it, but make it larger.

As I was reading, “For they”—that is, our parents—“verily, for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure.” Great pleasure they had in it, if they felt as I did! I would rather be whipped any time than whip my children. And when my father used to say, “Henry, I do not want to do it,” I used to say to myself, “What under heaven do you do it for, then?” I did not want to be whipped; and if he did not want to whip me, it seemed to me a very unnecessary ceremony! But when I became a father, I felt that nothing in the world was more true. How one feeling interprets another! When I had children to bring up, they so far inherited my nature, that they deserved to be whipped often; and they got their deserts! It was true I would rather have taken five blows than to have given one; and yet I put it on to them. And I remembered the precept, “What your hand finds to do, do it with your might.” Do not you know what that is? Are you not familiar with both sides of the experience? Paul says, “We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he”—God—“for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.”

Here is the end for which he is chastising us—that *we might be partakers of his nature*; that he might lift us up into the fullness of that manhood which he designed for us, and for which he is administering the realm of nature, and the realm of society, and the realm of grace, by the Holy Spirit.

And this is not peculiar to Paul; for you will find in 2d Peter precisely the same thought when, in opening his epistle, he says, “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

Here is the end that God is driving at continually, by such a grand sympathy, by such a tender personal connection with us, by such a constant interference and meddling with all that belongs to us, that we shall not be thrall'd in lusts and the lower parts of our nature, and depart from his will, and inherit the final remuneration; but that we shall escape, and go up and be made partakers of the divine nature.

Add still further to this idea the consideration that, in the divine mind, sympathy must take on the whole sphere of time in its infinite relations to the future. And it is impossible for God to sympathize with us as we do with each other, who live in hours; who live in weeks; who live in years. But there are no cycles and gradations of time in Him who liveth forever, nor in us when we are considered from the same stand-point—the stand-point of the divine mind. God looks upon human life as rolling on to be endless; and therefore he has regard to that which is best for us in all coming time; to that which shall make us meet for heaven; to that which shall make us the best companions for holy men, for saints, for all that are purified, and have gone home to glory. God's sympathy, if true and genuine, must have regard to these things.

I bless God that we may rise from the lower conceptions of divine sympathy to these higher and nobler attributes of it, and feel that we are in the hands of a Saviour who knows us altogether, and who indicates how minute his knowledge is by saying that the very hairs of our head are numbered. Put that down in your book, philosopher, who believe that that God only takes a general view of the world, who declares that he does not allow a sparrow to fall to the ground without his notice. Now, sparrows are the nuisances of birds in some countries. There are so many in England that men form “sparrow-clubs” to go out and kill them. They eat up every thing.

These sparrows, that are regarded very much as we regard vermin in an infested kitchen, are not without God's thought. Not even a fly—about the most useless and vexatious creature on the wing—is killed that God does not know it.

Such is the minuteness, the intimacy of the divine sympathy with us. And yet, beginning at that point, knowing every throb, knowing every pulsation, knowing every sympathy, every sentiment, every inflection of taste, every yearning, every disappointment, every pang, every tear, every joy, every triumph, all that belongs to the infinite variety of human experience, God, looking upon the whole of it, and watching all, and being familiar with all, and sympathizing with all, is still administering them all in such a way as to bring us higher and higher in ourselves on earth, and higher and higher into his likeness, and preparing us better and better for dwelling with him forever and forever—that is the sympathy that I want.

A little child, dropped as a waif in New-York, alas! made beautiful, now coming to be thirteen or fourteen years of age, without friends, and with many that have lustful eyes upon her, is met by the gracious missionary at the "Five Points." And he beholds her, and his heart yearns toward her. He finds out where she lives, in her little chamber, as yet not quite fallen, not quite overborne, yet coarse and rude, and already beginning to love the taste of the poison of flattery; already beginning to listen willingly; already beginning to calculate and to throb evil thoughts. He looks upon her, and is sad for her. While others would open her chamber door, and endeavor to persuade her to dismiss her industry; while others say to her, "Go, flutter, and be gay: take life and enjoy it while you may," he loves her more than they do. They love as the swine loves the husk, which he chews for the juice, and spits out a rejected cud; but he loves that child with a consciousness of what her immortality is; of what is the treasure of the riches that is in her, if only it can be saved and educated. And he would shut the door. They would open it. He would rather see her weep. They would rather see her, laugh. He would rather see her suffer, and go poorly clad. They would be glad if she would take temptation under the proffer of ribbons and jewelry. They would be glad to see her dressed in all these gew-gaw trifles. He, gaining influence with her, seems to her, in her moments of temptation, like a hard master. And yet, tell me, if it was your child, and if, after years had passed by, you found that this wanderer from your house had been saved by this missionary, and brought up in cramped circumstances, and familiar with poverty, and that he had been a faithful teacher to her, so that at length, when she reached her majority, she was still a virtuous woman, and beginning to love virtue more than vice, would you not say that he had been

the truest sympathizer? And who would sympathize most with you? Would it be that "indulgent Deity" who should make the present hour pleasant to you, and leave you to the waste of an eternal undoing? or would it be One who loved you so much that he was willing to administer discipline and watching and pain, and wring tears, that through those tears he might open the fountain of future joys? Is not that the divinest and the truest sympathy? Are there any of us that do not need just such a friend as this in Christ Jesus?

In view of the unfolding of the subject so far, I remark, first, that we can see why God seems sometimes to shut his ears to men's cries. It is because they come asking God to replace the very things that he has taken away from them on purpose. Men ask, "Do you believe in a prayer of faith?" I can hardly answer that, because there is so much to be said on the subject that you can never get it into a single answer. If you say, "Yes, I do," then the man that is just bankrupt begins to pray a prayer of faith, and says, "If ever I prayed, it was when I said, 'Lord God, look on my family; look on me; spare us, and save us.' And he did not hear." But let me rise into the counsel of God, who loved that man, and loved his household, and beheld in his great and growing riches the destruction of his children. His wealth was already untempering his heart. He was becoming large for this world, and small for the other. And God so loved him that he said, "Let me save those children, and let me spare the man." And he smote the four corners of his prosperity, and it was whistled away as dust before the wind. It takes a man a great while to get rich, but it takes him only a minute to get poor, in this world. And so the man goes on praying that God would restore his property to him. "No," says God, if you could only hear him, "I am going to give your son back. He is already beginning to think that, having a rich father, he will never want for money, and is going straight to the devil. I am going to give you back that child." But the man does not hear, and he says, "O Lord! give me back my property." "No," says God, "I am going to give you back your oldest daughter, who has been living for the vanity of this world, and thinking that it made very little difference to her what she did, or what she had, since she was well provided for, well-off, and that life was all smiling for her. I am going to make her understand that there is a burden and a work for her. I am going to bring down the most heavenly inspirations upon that child's soul. I am going to give that daughter back again to you. Still the man hears it not, and says, "Oh! give me back my property." But God is giving back child after child, and himself withal. After ten years, he is a poor man still; but he is a wiser man. He is the man of whom the neighbors say, "He is a great deal better than he used to be when he

had money ; and he is doing a great deal more good than he used to do."

When wheat is growing, it holds all its kernels tight in its own ear. But when it is ripe, the kernels are scattered every whither, and it is only the straw that is left. But where are the seeds ? One is growing here, another is growing there, and another there. It multiplies itself forty-fold when it is shredded and spoiled as an ear. It is the cause of life to twenty or thirty other roots and stems ; and it multiplies itself by what it has lost. And so it is with us in this world. Are there not a great many things that you pray to God for ? When a child says, " Will God give me any thing that I ask him for ? " and the mother says, " Yes," he says, " Then I am going to ask him to give me a great big apple." (This is one of the precious Sunday-school stories ! ) And men pray in like manner, asking God for what they want, and he is answering by giving them what they *ought* to want.

" No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous : nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." If you fight it, if you harden yourself under it, it does not do you any good ; but if you are " exercised " by it, and you let it work in you and develop your better manhood, then, afterward, it does work out in you " the peaceable fruit of righteousness." This is one reason why God seems not to answer men, and sympathize with them.

We see, also, why God seems so slow in succoring men that call upon him. It is not because he is lax in sympathy, but because time must bring, often, what we ask. By prayer I can not carry forward the seasons. I can not *pray in* the spring. With the good old puritan, on the first day in April I can pray that God will bless the season and the seed ; but I can not hasten April or May. I can not bring forward June. I can plant my seed ; but I must wait until nature nourishes the seed, and brings it into ripeness. There is much that God is doing through the element of time. And God is not slow to hear because the blessing is delayed in the coming. It is all the better the longer it takes to come.

We see, also, the reach and application of the fact that divine love does not so much care to make men happy now as to secure their happiness in the life that is to come. I do not mean that there is an ascetic element in the Gospel. I do not mean that it is not a part of the divine plan to have a new heaven on earth, a new earth in which shall dwell righteousness, and that there will not be perfect happiness in that final day ; but now, as the world is, and as the conflict goes on in the world, it is far more important that men should be made manly and pure and Christ-like than that they should be

made happy to-day or to-morrow—except so far as happiness may be blessed as an instrument of righteousness. And therefore it is that divine love is not to be inferred from the presence of joy altogether. Nor is the business of sympathy to be inferred from the want of joy and prosperity. God is administering for something other and higher.

We also understand, if this be so, that men are continually falling out with God; that men are continually getting into trouble. There are two systems at work—one which is supervising the events of human life with reference to their final reward in heaven; and another in which we are seeking to gather out of each day the harvest that belongs to that day. We are legislating for time and for eternity. We have our condition meet for our character. We work for the sake of joy—God for the sake of purity; we for abundance—he for moral nobleness. These two administrations are constantly coming into conflict of jurisdiction. One or the other must have superiority. The secret of more than half our trouble in life is, that we are attempting to shape our life for the world; and God, who loves us, is attempting to overrule that bad engineering, and to shape our life for the glory of the eternal world. And so much of suffering as I see in life I sympathize with—and I do not! When an organ is at concert-pitch, every thing else has got to come up to it—and the instrument is generally at concert-pitch. Some note by and by falls away; and then, when the stop is drawn, and the scale is played, every time that note comes in, it wails. Why? Because all the other notes are against it, you would think. So they are, when a note is out of tune. Once have a string of a violin below pitch, and all the three other strings are fighting it. Let one note of a piano be out of tune, and all the rest of the piano is at enmity with it. If one pipe of an organ is out of tune, all the rest of the organ is against it. That note wails, and wails, and all the other notes are sweet-sounding. By and by, the hand of the tuner begins to bring it up; and up and up it goes, crying and whining; but the moment it touches the concert-pitch, it falls in, and there is no longer any conflict of one note with the other. The moment it comes into harmony, there is no longer any “wolfing” of vibrations, no longer any turmoil. It is in tune. And the sorrows and troubles of this world are but just discordant wails that men make when God takes them and attempts to bring them up into harmony by bringing them to concert-pitch.

Now, I am sorry for suffering; but I am heartily glad that God is willing to make men suffer. I am glad to see men whose pride does not satisfy them. I am glad to see men whose selfishness does not make them happy. I am hurt when I see too much joy with sensuousness; but I rejoice when I see men vexed and plagued—men who are following the bent of their lower nature.

"I," says the Psalmist, "was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked." "Their eyes stand out with fatness; they have more than heart could wish." "Pride compasseth them about as with a chain." God did not care for them, it would seem. He cast them off. They were reprobates. But as for him, he washed his hands in innocency. And yet the waters of affliction rolled over him; and he moaned and pined. Why not? God was dealing with him as with a son. But at last he found out the meaning of these things. When "I went into the sanctuary, then I understood their end." Oh! what slippery places they stood on. As for himself, he goes off into that sweet descant in which he declares that God shall be his portion in time and in eternity. One of the noblest and sweetest of the Psalms I think is that. And I see that very Psalm enacted every day. Men in trouble; men whom God is loving; men that oftentimes think they are set apart for mischief—such men God is blessing and helping.

Dear Christian brethren, I bring to your memory a Saviour who is in sympathy and in blessed relations with you. Fall not into that weak and poor way of thinking of the sympathy of Christ as if it were merely showering sunlight on you. God makes his sun to rise on the good and on the evil alike. This came to my mind when I came out into the sunlight this morning; and I said to myself, "Yes, there are the crickets, there are the mice, there are the bugs, there are the worms, there are creeping things innumerable; and the sun does not know how to make any difference between these things and men. It makes no discriminations. It shines on me, and it shines on every thing else just as much." But when my God looks on me, I hope he makes a difference. I hope, when he administers toward me and the brute, it is not all the same. I want to feel that he is pressing down the bad and lifting up the good, in me. And if it hurts, only let me know what the hurt means, and I am willing to bear it. If it is only God, let him take any thing and every thing. Empty my crib; empty my cradle; wring my heart; shut me up; do any thing—Lord, God, love me, and then do any thing! But give me all the world, and all that can shake down as from some tree of paradise on my head; and if all I am to have is what I can pick up here, and pick up on the ground at that, Lord, thou dost not love me!

To be loved of God; to be nurtured here; to be disciplined; to be taught; to be prepared for the heavenly estate, and then go home to be present with the Lord forever—that is joy unspeakable, as it shall be full of glory.

May God give us this better portion, and so may Christ's sympathy make us better men.

## PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

O God! we join with those that rejoice this morning. If half the joys that slumber, and their occasions with us, were to speak forth, what words would suffice? How all our life, as we look back upon it, from the stand of thine own counsels, glitters before us as the lawn in the summer morning. Every blade of grass, and every flower full of dew, and all the dew full of the sun, and the sun, speak of thee! How is our whole life an argument of thy wisdom! And because it seems dark, it is divine; since thou dost not work upon patterns so small as ours, nor dost, when thy hand sweeps, measure the sight of our eye, but the infinite reach of thine own. Thy wonders and thy workings are ever so far beyond our thought, but the ends of thy ways are apparent to us. And yet, at times we see along the courses of our experience such evident marks of thy divine mercy and goodness that we marvel that we were ever dissatisfied. We marvel that we were not glad evermore. We wonder that we ever distrusted. We dismiss with indignation all fear and all doubt; and to ourselves, then, we seem as birds that have lifted themselves far above the thicket, and sing in the serene and upper air without obstruction. So have we been lifted up; and, chased back again by hawking enemies, we have hid; and hiding, been darkling; and soon, overthrown in our sadness, we mourned and wondered—wondered if there be a God, wondered if there be immortality; wondered at things as strange round about us, though familiar. We questioned thee; questioned the wisdom of all thy ways. And we so disturbed ourselves, and disquieted our spirits within us, that we had no more in God, but walked in the solitude of our own orphanage. Then, O God! thou hast had mercy upon us; and we have been as children that wandered in the darkness, in the woods, and alone; and we have been found of thee—we, that could not find thee. Thou hast shone again, we know not how. By the enginery of no arguments of ours, by no power that we could bring to bear, didst thou come forth. We love thee, because thou hast loved us; and we found thee, because we were found of thee.

So thou hast been dealing with us, carrying us from year to year, until the present hour. Would that we had learned so as never again to repeat the mistakes of years ago. But still we are faint, though pursuing. Still we are feeble-minded. While we should have been able to teach others, we needed that some one should teach us. Still, we can not cast away the crutch and the staff. We have not learned to lean upon the invisible yet. Our eyes and our ears do crave food. We are ashamed to confess it, but if thou wert only present as a man, our faith, helped by sight, would mount vehement and strong. We are yet not so weaned from our senses that we can take in that spiritual life, and the nutriment of truths spiritual, and live as seeing Him who is invisible.

O thou that dost pity our infirmity, and experience sympathy for us, and behold, and spare, and love, and forgive, what need have we to recite our manifold wickedness and transgression? It is all before thee. For they that transgress are as shrubs that are full of thorns to men that handle them. We are filled with spines; and yet, thou art as a gardener constantly tending and pruning us. We pierce thy hands with our sins. We are every day grieving thee. As they that are vulgar in our presence offend us; as they that are rude and boisterous disturb the peace and the quietude of refinement; as they that are selfish are hateful to the beneficent; as the lowly seem to the proud wondrously uncouth; so we, in our unformed nature, are to thee. And yet, with unfolding and infolding tenderness, wondrous beyond all human conception, thou art patient, and dost love unloveliness, and dost fashion uncouthness. Thou art the Teacher. We are the poor scholars, learning slowly, still refusing to practice what we learn, too often. And yet, we live by the great bounty of thy sufferance. And thou sparest us, though the work is slow, because there are many summers yet. Thou art still bringing to bear a thousand influences that gradually ameliorate, though we will not hear thy voice. And thou art not judging us as we are

now, but as thou seest that we shall be when thy work is completed. What strange beauty afar off dawns to thine eye behind our ugliness! How wondrous must we seem that are now a blemish, seen as we shall appear when without blemish or imperfection thou shalt present us to the throne of thy Father! O wonder-working Saviour! still abide with us; still bear our infirmities; still forgive our sins; still give us joy for sorrow—such joy as will lead us above secular sorrow. And grant that the life which we now live in the flesh we may live by faith in the Son of God.

And what can we render? What is it that we sing to thee? Oh! that our lives might be singing to thee. May we draw forth every power of our nature, and consecrate it to the uses for which thou art thyself living. May we not be proud of our understanding as ours, but seek rather how mightily it may be consecrated to God's work among men. Hast thou given us any gift of deep heartiness; any gift of consolation; any gift of song; any gift of skill in the hand; any gift of wisdom and prudence? May we seek not so much to adorn ourselves with praise for having these things, as to know how with them we shall praise Him that loved us, and gave himself for us. So may we bring every thing which we have, every day; and may our very powers and gifts become more precious in our sight. May we take them from thine hand every day, and consecrate them to thy use. We pray that we may be kept from that pride, and that vanity, and that selfishness, and that worldliness, which soon wreck the purity of the soul. And may we learn to find a present Saviour every day and every hour. May we find thee in every place and in all things. And so may our spiritual eye, enlightened and purified, see wondrous things in thy great world, and in our part of human life. We beseech of thee that thou wilt accept the gladness of the hour in all thy people everywhere. We thank thee, though men are divided in this world, opposing each other, and separating further and further too often, that invisibly thou art drawing them together, and that the voice of praise and of joy, going up, enters, as the voice of one people, and of one church upon earth. United are they in their prayers, united in their faith, united in their love, united in all their hopes, united in that part which escapes from the rudeness and coarseness of life, and comes up before thee. Thy people are all one. Grant, we beseech of thee, that we may enter into these higher conceptions of unity, and rejoice in that coming day when it shall grow more and more toward outward things, and thy people shall be united in all the earth before men.

We pray that thou wilt bless thy cause in all places of the earth. Remember our own land. Quickened the hearts of thy people, that they may give liberally and labor abundantly for the spread of knowledge, of intelligence, of virtue. We pray that thou wilt still redeem this land from coarse secular prosperity, and build it up in a holy faith, and in the purity of the Gospel.

Remember, we pray thee, all the peoples that are struggling for their manhood. Be thou on the side of the weak. Hold thou the sword of mighty armies invisible. Fight for them that fight for the liberty of being men, and uphold them. And we pray that the day may come when men shall be so wise, so intelligent, so virtuous, so large by growth in true manhood, that no power shall be found adequate to hold them fast in any prison, or in any tyranny. So cause the people to grow that there shall be found none but God strong enough or wise enough to rule them. Rule thou them. Come again, Lord God, by thy dear Saviour, to reign a thousand years upon the earth. And let all names and all nations, all magistrates and all kings, praise thee, and all people see thy salvation.

Which we ask in the name of the Beloved. *Amen.*

## PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

OUR Father, wilt thou bless the word which we have spoken, and the truth on which it is based? Grant to every one some comfort, some enlightenment, some incitement to further fidelity. Grant, we pray thee, that all thy providences, and thy gracious dealings with thy people, may be interpreted to their faith. May they rejoice not when corn and wine increase, not because they are strong in wealth or in wisdom, but in this—that the Lord is their God. And we beseech of thee that thou wilt bless the day, and bless all our homes, and all our experiences this day. And finally bring us into that rest which remaineth for the people of God in heaven; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

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